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- PRIVATE -

To the Members and Adherents of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church :—

As rumors are abroad with regard to the position of our Church and my relation to you as your pastor, I think it right to put before you the facts as far as they are known to me, so that all of you may realize more fully the importance of the crisis we have now reached. You are all aware that we were indebted to the late Hon. John Robson for the means to enable us to build the church; that the trustees of the congregation gave him a mortgage on the church property as security for the money advanced, and that accommodation was only intended to be temporary until a mortgage loan could be secured for a term of years. Before Mr. Robson left for London, he signed a bond which was being prepared in order to secure a loan on advantageous terms; and, in October last, when the late managers entered upon the course which has led to our present sad condition, that bond was almost completed and the loan easily within reach. Certainly my bitterest enemies cannot blame me for that failure. As you are aware, during my absence from home, Dr. Milne submitted a plan of handling the debt, a plan which has already been adopted by other churches in the city, and which has commended itself to all who are capable of judging of it.

This plan called for a payment of $2,180 of interest every year for twenty-five years, at the end of which period the debt would be reduced certainly by the amount of $10,000, and probably by a much larger amount. The company, however, offering this loan demand that the interest should be guaranteed by a bond signed by members and adherents of the church, each person being only responsible for the amount he himself promised, and that only if the ordinary revenue of the church failed to produce sufficient funds to cover the interest. This guarantee is not yet forthcoming; some, I am told, refusing to do anything till they know what I intend to do, as they propose to leave the church if I continue as its pastor, and others refusing on grounds which have no connection with my going or staying. I am sure you will see that refusing to help to save the church from being brought to the hammer through personal malice towards me is not a sign of very high Christian principle, or even of those who take such an attitude having any extraordinary degree of intelligence. The securing of the church to the congregation has no connection whatever with the existence of the present pastorate. Allowing the church to be sold will not affect my position as the pastor, and saving it and the honor of the congregation will not keep me one hour longer in the church than if I had to continue my ministry in a hall. Why not, then, consider what is to be done, altogether apart from the present pastor, and all unite to save the church? When men attach conditions to the fulfilment of an obvious duty, it is natural to doubt if they are really serious in their professions of interest and of anxiety to help.

But the reasonings of those opposed to me have evidently had weight with many, and I am told that even my own friends think I ought to resign, and that my resignation would bring about entire harmony in the congregation. I do not know who the friends referred to are, and I am not inclined to give great weight to their opinions until I have their names; and I am not at all convinced that there would be perfect harmony brought about by driving me out of St. Andrew's pulpit. Are all the congregation willing to follow the men as their leaders who have given such an exhibition of the spirit which animates them during the past nine months? If they are, my path of duty would be much clearer, for I would not remain the pastor of the church for one moment if these men were allowed to resume office. But it is assumed that those who are opposed to me are speaking in your name. A telegram in a Vancouver paper says: "The congregation insists upon Mr. McLeod's retirement." Now, as you are well aware, the voice of the congregation has been expressed in exactly the opposite direction, promising to stand by me and support me; and, in the face of that honest expression of the church's mind, it is the height of impertinence for any number of individuals to assume the right to speak in your name, and to say you desire my resignation.

And now I ask what are my crimes that you should allow me to be driven out by the faction who have made themselves so conspicuous during the past nine months? You brought me here with the most enthusiastic promises of support and encouragement from a congregation where I was loved and honored, and where I have been welcomed during my holiday with the warmest expressions of affection. I came to you when you were a broken fragment of a congregation, numbering about 70 members, suffering from divisions which are even yet smouldering among you and hindering me. I came notwithstanding that I had heard something of the treatment meted out to my predecessors. I have worked with such success as was possible to a man handicapped as I have been. I have filled the church from Sabbath to Sabbath, and the membership has increased at a ratio even beyond the highest in the Province. I do not by any means imagine that I have done all I might have done, or that I have attained to any approach to my own ideal, but I am not ashamed to have my work appraised; and I can say that up to a year ago, none would have been more willing to bear testimony to the fruitfulness of my labors than just these very men who have persecuted me with such bitterness during the

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But the cry is raised now by my enemies: "See what the minister has brought us to! This deadlock is all his fault." God will judge those who make such statements, and I am sure all of you who are not blinded by personal hatred will place the responsibility of the present sad state of things upon the right shoulders. I expressed to the office bearers my willingness to accept as my salary whatever the ordinary revenue produced after providing for the interest and the running expenses of the church. I offered, also, to do what I could to have the guarantee completed, but my proposals did not meet with any response, simply because the enemy would sooner see the church wrecked than saved through my help. I am told that my enemies are saying that it was tacitly understood at the Presbytery that, while I was to have the apparent victory, the petitioners were to have the real one; that my asking for leave of absence meant that I proposed to leave altogether, and that the weeping scene was not because by-gones were to be by-gones, but because we were bidding each other a last good-bye. All I have to say is that I was no party to any such bargain, and took my holiday because I needed it and deserved it after all I had suffered, and because I hoped that absence for a time might help to heal dissensions.

I never have looked for a sphere of labor; the spheres have always looked for me, as in your own case. I never sought your call, nor desired it; you pressed it upon me; and now, if you wish me to retire, you must have the courage of your convictions and say so. I am not the servant of any faction in the congregation, but of the whole body, and I will not forsake my post at the dictate of open enemies or false friends until I know your mind as a body. Will you, then, for my sake and the sake of the church, answer the enclosed question and place your answer in the plate on Sabbath first? Of course, you will understand this is simply for my own guidance, that I may know whether it is true that you think it right in the sight of God to ask for my resignation, or whether there are any of you who still desire to continue under my ministry.

I am, yours sincerely,

P. McF. MacLEOD.

Do you wish me to tender my resignation as the pastor of St Andrew's Church?

Answer yes or no ....

Signature,

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P. S.—Where there are more than one member or adherent in a family, one may answer for all.